

“Green Mountain Chronicles”
Oral History Transcriptions, 1981-1989 (bulk: 1987-1988)
MSA 199 & 200

Introduction

This transcription is one of approximately 42 transcriptions of interviews with individuals conducted primarily in 1987 and 1988 in preparation for a radio program sponsored by the Vermont Historical Society entitled “Green Mountain Chronicles.”

Scope and Content

The transcriptions in this collection represent interviews of approximately 42 individuals conducted primarily in 1987 and 1988 by Mark Greenberg, Mary Kasamatsu, Eleanor Ott, and Tom Davis in preparation for a radio series entitled “Green Mountain Chronicles.” The series of 52 five-minute programs was broadcast by commercial and public radio stations throughout the state in late 1988 and early 1989. The earliest interview in the collection was conducted in 1981; the latest was in 1989.

The interviewers spoke with well known Vermonters such as Governors Philip Hoff, Deane Davis, and Madeleine Kunin; lesser known personalities such as Catherine Robbins Clifford, one of the first women to hike the entire length of the Long Trail; and historians such as Weston Cate. The following inventory of the collection highlights the major theme(s) of each interview. The following list of program tapes gives the title of each radio program.

The goal of the radio series was to tell the history of Vermont in the twentieth century using archival sound recordings and recent interviews. The project was undertaken by the VHS in celebration of its 150th anniversary in 1988 and was funded by a \$14,000 grant from the Vermont Council on the Humanities and Public Issues with additional support from New England Telephone Company.

MSA 199, Folder 0 contains background information on the project. The VHS website at www.vermonthistory.org/gmchronicles contains a list of the Green Mountain Chronicles radio broadcasts and audio files of those broadcasts.

MK Mr. Chase, why don't you tell me where you were living at the time of the flood?

SC I was living at the time of the flood on Randall Street. I was working in the bank which is on Bank Hill and I was 23 years old at the time, single and I was living with my folks and my younger sister was living with us too. She was 15 and still in high school. At the time of the flood which I think was a Thursday afternoon, if I remember right, we closed up the bank about 5:00 o'clock and Randall Street was at the end where we lived was in a kind of dip so we couldn't go down Elm Street and around the corner to our house because of the water in the road. So I went down Main Street and cut through the neighbors yard and came back up to my house and ate supper and about dark we began to get a little alarmed. The water came up from the river and Randall Street runs horizontal with the river and there is a big meadow from Randall Street to the river. The water had come up through the meadow, which is incidently just north of the State Hospital building. It had come across the field because of the damed river. I mean damed by the wreckage against the bridges and it had came up across the road and into the house and was getting onto our floor. The cellar was flooded and so about I guess about 7:30 or 8:00 they came along in a boat, the firemen, asking people if they wanted to get out to get out and if they weren't to get up on the upper floors. We decided to come out. We had a big dog. He was a man about town. Everybody knew the dog. More people knew the dog than knew me, I think. We started out in the boat, my sister and my folks and the dog had to swim. That was a great concern of my mothers, because she felt the dog would drown and we assured her that the dog could swim alright. We went around the corner and up Elm Street, which is a short street, to the foot of Bank Hill where we landed and the thing that seemed to interest most people that were standing there watching the rescue work was to see the dog, "Jock", coming out. They didn't say any thing about the Chases landing safely. But Oh! here comes Jock, he got out of it alright. So that is the way it started for us. The bank flooded up seven feet inside and came to the top of the vault door which was closed at the time of course, because the bank was closed. We didn't get back in there until Saturday in order to clean up anything. In the meantime, the water had come up to the top of the Bank Hill and had created an island up the top of the hill and going up Stowe Street. So coming from the north side and the south side, it was just an island on top of the Main Street which included the Congregational Church and so that became the feeding

place for the town as well as the community center. From there the road back up Stowe Street toward Waterbury Center, the High School, that was the only way of entrance and exit. The church became the feeding station. Because I couldn't get back into the bank to help there, for something better to do, I joined the kitchen force at the church. My old friend John Berry and a gentlemen by the name of Asa Pickard, who was a chef and another helper, Bill O'Brien, formed the kitchen gang. One thing that was rather unusual about that was getting the food. There was one grocery store on Stowe Street which was out of the flood, which was able to furnish us with can goods or whatever they had for food. But there were neighborhood stores and a market around in the flooded area. When they got in there of course, this food station went on for weeks and months after it was established, because of people being out of their homes, so we were always looking for more food. They got all the can goods they could out of these flooded stores, but by the time they got them, the labels were all gone. One of the funny things that happened was that we would get the canned stuff in and we didn't know peas from prunes, you know. So they would get them lined up on the table and the chef would say well, we don't know what we are going to have for dinner and he would go down through with his cleaver and chop the top of the cans. We didn't know if they were going to get corn, peaches or what. We found enough to eat. Another thing about the food supply was there was a milk train down in the station yard that could not get out, they came in and loaded and would normally go south and they couldn't get out because of the track washouts. So it was hung up there and we had all the use of that milk and cream that was in the train. So we didn't suffer from lack of that. We lived high on the hog with cream and plenty of milk.

MK Canned corn and cream.

SC We got back into the bank as I say on Saturday and I was more valuable down there helping clean up than I was in the church. We had the usual job of getting the slimy mud out of everything.

MK How deep was the mud?

SC How deep was the mud? Well, it didn't pile up. You see, most of the houses on Main Street were flooded by a set back of water. It wasn't in the direct current of the river. At the south end of Main Street, toward Montpelier, that was very close to the river and that suffered very heavily from the rapids. This is where

most of the deaths occurred over in Duxbury and Waterbury and they really got it. Houses were torn apart and floated down the river. Up around our area it was just the water rushing in with the mud and rushing out again or going out gradually again and settling. The slime might have been probably a foot in some places. But it was miserable. Once they got into the house, it got into the partitions and under the floors and you never got it all out. It generated into a fine white dust and it would come up through the floor boards years afterwards. One of the things that was rather different and that happened in the bank was that our Treasurer who had lived on our area down on Randall Street, corner of Elm Street and as soon as we closed the bank, they decided to move out. They went up on Stowe Street where our Assistant Treasurer lived. Mr. Clark, our Treasurer, lived with the Joslins until they could get back into their house. So, as I say as soon as the water went down, they were able to open the vault and the vault was so tight so air tight, that although it went to the top of the door on the outside, there was only about not more than 20 inches on the floor. It got in onto the lower level of the safe deposit boxes. And in the vault we had a safe in which we kept the currency. That was raised on wheels and so the currency in the lower level of the safe was saturated. The water did get into that. That was not so tight, but still, but not a great deal, because it was high. That currency was wet and so Mr. Clark and Mr. Joslin took the currency home up to his house and he was quaking in his boots to think that he had all that money in his own home. They hung the stuff up on clothes lines in the kitchen with clothes pins and got out the iron board and I don't know that he had (I think they had an electric iron at that time) or else they heated the irons on the stove and they ironed out the money and dried it out and they got it back into the bank again before the bank opened for business. That was one of our problems. We got very good cooperation as far as getting our supplies in. Of course, our stationary and all that kind of stuff were ruined and the supply areas knew about our conditions and hardly without us asking, they started shipping in quantities of envelopes. Of course, you had to have a lot of that stuff printed up. We got terrific assistance that way. We had our correspondent banks in Boston and New York and Albany and they all did anything they could to help us. They sent us more money, currency, whatever. Because there was very little you could do with your money in those days, there was no place to spend it and they didn't want to keep it in their houses and so when we opened up for business, we took in more money than they drew out.

MK I was going to ask you if there was any kind of small run on the bank?

SC No, it went just the other way. So we gradually got hoed out and of course and it incurred a lot of repair work, but it was mostly just getting the dirt out and cleaning up and the other thing was our machines. We had posting machines for our commercial accounts. We had some adding machines. We were not heavily into machines in a small bank in those days, but again we got immediate assistance from the service companies like the Burroughs and I don't remember. I guess that we all had Burroughs machines in those days. They had a service in Burlington and they just came to our rescue and we didn't suffer very much. Everyone, the whole town, was particularly during the emergency, it was surprising the attitude they had. They figured that we all are in this together and we might just as well be happy about it and when they had to get together at the churches for the meals and things like that, it was terrific. As you probably heard from other people that you have talked with, the food, the dinners that were brought in from Burlington by the Lions Club and other organizations I guess. It meant the whole crew came up from Burlington, the waitresses and cooks that helped our cooks. They had to transport all that stuff up by road and they had to find a route out through Smuggler's Notch and come back down through Waterbury Center and Stowe of course. They did that at first at Thanksgiving and they did it again at Christmas. I don't remember how many meals that they had, it was that everybody turned out. They fed the whole town and everybody pitched in and they were in great spirits. Of course, as you got back into your house and the drudgery started of cleaning out. A lot of people lost heart, but again we had the college boys in. Even Middlebury, Norwich and Vermont came in and they had a lot of fun cleaning out. Their job mostly was cleaning out the cellars which was where the mud settled in the cellars. We had quite a few, I don't want to be demeaning of the Italian population we had. We had a terrific population of the Italians because of the granite cutting sheds. We had three or four sheds at that time here and we had a big population of Italians. Italians in those days, they would make their own wine. They would have grapes that would come in by the car loads with the Barre-Montpelier people and they would share the grapes and make their own wine. They had it in the cellars. They carried quite a stock of it. When those college boys got into clean up cellars, they discovered the wine.

Actually, with the permission of the people, they weren't just taking it, they were allowed to take it. They were glad to have them clean up cellars and willing to help. Those boys had a lot of fun with that wine. they did a terrific job. Everybody did, everyone in the town, doctors, lawyers, the bankers, everybody pitched in to clean out the churches. Our church, the Congregational Church was not hurt in that regard, but the Catholic Church, the Methodist Church were all ??? and they all had to be cleaned up.

MK How long was the main part of the town without water?

SC That is a good question. I really can't answer that, but I don't think there was any great delay on that because our water supply was up in the hills toward Waterbury Center, off the Mt. Hunger range up in there. Unless there were probably some breaks in the main lines coming down, which followed the brook sometimes, there could have been some washouts there. I don't think there might have been a weeks delay. I can recall that when we got back into our house, which was on the following Saturday, they started washing up right off, hosing down and my mother started with her washing. I had another sister that lived in Montpelier, who worked for the State and one of the first things she did when we got back into the house was to buy the first washing machine we ever had. That was powered by electricity. We had our power back fairly soon also. Before that, Mother did the washing with the old laundry bench and tubs and wringer. That was a god send. There was another thing about my sister that was probably known at the time. She did work in Montpelier and she had an apartment up there. She didn't commute. We had no communication at all. Everything was out. But people apparently had gone through and were able to report. They spread the word in Montpelier that Waterbury was absolutely washed away. Everybody was dead or most everybody dead. So my sister was very excited about it and there was a gentleman that worked in Montpelier who did commute and that was Dan Jones and he lived in the house, two houses down from the Methodist Church. The old Carpenter homestead. Clayton, his son, lives there now. They decided they would come to Waterbury. So they started out, I guess it was Friday morning or Saturday, as soon as they could. They started out and they got down this side of Middlesex on to Slip Hill. The cover of that shows the picture there. They came to where the water had washed the bed all out onto the track and left the rails suspended in mid-air. They got that far and said they weren't going to walk across that suspended track, so they went down on the, I guess, the up hill side of the track, down

into the gully and back up the other side and they came down into Waterbury. She made that 12 mile trip in a very short time. She was quite relieved to get home and find out that we were all alive.

MK That is quite a picture.

SC There are some very good pictures in that article. Very good. Well, I don't know. We had a dog "Jock" who was a decendent I guess of a sheepdog and we couldn't keep him. We were living around with people and we couldn't keep track of him. In fact, he roamed all over town anyway. He and another dog, a german-police dog, that lived across the street from us, they started to roam and when the flood came down through the valley and hit the farms, either the cows got out themselves out of the barn, because being in November, they weren't normally out at pasture, or probably the farmers let them out to fend for themselves, I don't know. There were dead cows all over the place and the dogs running around began to find the cows and we were just afraid of what could happen if he ate the dead cows. Until we got back into our house and could control them, we couldn't do very much about the dog running around and he finally came home and we got back into our normal habits again.

MK The dog didn't get sick?

SC No, it didn't seem to bother him. They had quite a job getting all these cows buried and cleaned up. Farms took an awful licking down through the valley because along the river, it washed the top soil right off to gravel. It took a long time for the meadows to recover.

MK Doesn't Smuggler's Notch eventually become pretty difficult in the winter to get through?

SC In normal times in the summer time when the roads are all open and everything, it is a narrow passage. If you have never been up there, you get up to the crest of the notch road and you just wind your way through the big boulders. I don't think there is more than one car's space through there. Of course, those roads were not damaged. But there again in November, normally the road would be closed. They close it in the fall when the first snow comes and they don't open it up until about this time. To come up through there with the vehicles that they had in those days, the old trucks and cars, it was very dangerous. Now, I don't know, what the approach was from the Burlington side. They probably came out through Essex Center and out that way. Possibly on Route 15, I don't know. How they got there, we didn't

question. They got there. From there down, Stowe people immediately after the flood was known to them, they started coming our way with relief, with food and things. The men had to bring materials along to repair the bridges and the culverts so they could get down through. It was all upland so they could come, but the streams going under the roads had washed them out. They got down here in record time and the women in the meantime were baking. They had baked pies, breads and preserves and anything they had in their homes and they were just terrific the way they came down and helped us. They even, in reading one of those articles, they even went to Morrisville to get boats and things like that to bring down here to Waterbury to help out. When they started out, as you probably heard, they only had a canoe and a small boat. When they started out before dark and Thursday night to get the people out that they could easily reach and in the greatest danger. Those fellows were just terrific with what they did. Then we came out in a Fire Department boat and I guess they had one or two boats. Then they began to bring in these homemade boats or whatever they could get. So that before the night was out, they had quite a bit of help. So Stowe and the Waterbury Center people deserved a lot of credit and they got it. My sister who as I say was 15 and our school was one of the places they were using for a dormitory and bedding down. I guess there was some feeding up there, but not much, so the school was disrupted. My sister had friends and my older sister had friends in St. Albans. So as soon as they could arrange passage, my younger sister Barbara went up to St. Albans and finished out the school year at Bellows Free Academy and then she came back and finished high school here.

MK What was it like in terms of rebuilding the roads?
How dramatically were the roads changed around here?

SC Terrific. Between here and Bolton, they were just putting in the cement road on Route 2 and they had crews working down there that were boarding around it at the farm houses. A few of them lost their lives. But it tore up. It is unbelievable the way the flood tore up the road. It got under and laid these big cement slabs right over. It was a long time before they could use that road. In the meantime, people still had to go through the notch and we could even go from Waterbury Center, just end of the Worcester range, there was a gap in Middlesex Notch, which is now closed. There is a beaver dam up there now. Maybe you are familiar with that. So you could go all the way from Burlington through the gaps to Montpelier. You could go down

East Hill into Montpelier. Those arteries were used. The river roads between here and Montpelier, I don't think they had too much problem. I think that was opened up in fairly good season, but the road to Burlington because of the construction work that was going on there, that was torn up anyway, and with the cement gone, it was quite a job. But the bus line, the origin of the Vermont Transit, was started here in Waterbury at Jewetts, Fred Jewett and Edgar Jewett. They started out by making their own buses out of old automobiles. they would buy an old car and if it had a good motor and drive train, they would build a body on it. They were pretty rough to begin with. But they started the business and they eventually got to the point, where they could go out and buy the big buses. What they did during the flood was remarkable. The way they got right through. They went to Barre, all the way to Burlington and they travelled on almost impassable roads. To hear Edgar talk about it, he had a paper on it once. In fact, when we had our 50th anniversary of the flood, which was filmed and broadcast by CBS, he gave a narrative on the flood and his busline. I didn't realize what they did. They got through. The travelling was pretty rough. Of course, we didn't get the railroad here for a long time. That was a big event when that was finished up. The thing that created the flood here in Waterbury, that is such a high flood, not setback. The steel bridge here at the south end of town which is in bad shape right now and is going to be replaced soon. In two spans. In the early wreckage that came down in the early evening, banked up against that main span and that steel bridge was keeled right over into the river. Well then, we had the Winooski Street Bridge which was still an old wooden covered bridge. All this debris swept down and by that time, it didn't stay in the river beds, it was going right down back of the State Hospital across the big meadows, skirting around the cemetery and in back of the church and going boom against the covered bridge. Whole houses were parked here. And this was holding the water back so it couldn't go down the river which is rather narrow there into just sweeping back against the village. So this was really a set back that we were getting in the village. As soon as this wreckage was cleared at the Winooski Street bridge, either by natural sources or maybe they did some blasting, I don't know. As soon as that was opened up, a little, it didn't take long for the water to get back down to fairly normal. It wasn't unusual for us to see water as spring freshes to come across the big meadow by the State Hospital and come right over to Randall Street. That was the normal thing to expect in the spring. But this was way beyond our expectations.

MK I am wondering, if I had lived through something like that, I think I might have been nervous for some time after that everytime it started to rain and kept up for awhile.

SC We were nervous nine years later. That was a hurricane flood. That didn't hit us as much as it did down in Rhode Island and Connecticut. The storm came up the Connecticut and it hit into New Hampshire. It was just a strong south wind that came up through here. That again was a flood. We moved our furniture out of the house that day and we were better organized. The talc mine was operating up here in Moretown and the manager of that lived across the street from us and he got the big trucks just as soon as the water began to back up and he got his house cleaned out, the things that he wanted to move out on the first floor and then he offered the service to us. So what we did after he had moved his stuff, we took the piano and I don't remember. We lost our piano in the first flood I guess. The heavy furniture that we had, we moved it on the truck and he just drove it up on high ground and left it there. The water only came into the cellar. It came up to the floor. But we were nervous. Believe me we were nervous many times. Of course, before this flood, there had been some very serious floods in Waterbury, but nothing like this one. You have seen and read about so many things that happened in the town that were so pathetic. So many people died and so many of them unnecessarily. The thing that everybody I guess in the whole state were surprised was the way that we recovered. I guess that is true with any catastrophe people. Just face it and go to town and work and get it done. When you get through, a lot of it was better than it was to begin with. Of course, we had a lot of help on our reconstruction and rebuilding. The Red Cross did a terrific job here. Of course, for the people that tried to, that had the means themselves, but didn't want to spend it. The Red Cross rule was if you can do your own repair you should use your own money. If you are in need we will help you. Well, a lot of people had the money, but they just were not going to spend it and they applied for help and misinformed the people in some cases. We saw some of this because we were in the bank and we knew peoples situations. but as a rule, everybody was pretty honest about these things. If it hadn't been for the Red Cross and other charities, we would have suffered a lot more. I am connected with the library and at that time, I was not. Our library is down on Lower Main Street before you get

down to the over pass of the railroad. It was a private home. Dr. James owned it and he was a Civil War Surgeon and he became very interested in the early library, so when he died he left the home for a library. We had had it not too long and repaired it and made it over into a library and we had a good supply of books. A very good circulation. Of course, that got wiped out to the second floor. Everything was just dumped up in the yard. So Waterbury, Connecticut heard about our plight and they consider us I guess their distant cousin. I don't know, but they felt pity. They sent, I don't remember the amount of money. In those days, it was a large sum, somewhere between \$10,000 - \$15,000, probably it is quoted in some of those books. In fact, we have the photocopy of the original check framed down in the library somewhere now. They came through with this money which got us back into the book business and besides that we had a lot of donated books. We were back in the library business as soon as we got cleaned out. That required quite a bit of repair work too. So in return, years later, Waterbury, Connecticut got caught in one of those tidal wave floods down there and they got a lot of damage. So we took up a collection here in Waterbury and it was a sizable amount. I don't think it was as much as they gave us, but I would say off hand around \$7,000 and we sent it down. In fact, we had a delegation that went down and presented the check. They were very appreciative and I think eventually they put that into a new recreation park of some type. So it created that bond between the two Waterbury's. And we actually were named after Waterbury, Connecticut because Vermont and Waterbury particular^y had a lot of Connecticut people here that settled.

- MK Nice story. One thing that Mrs. Ryder mentioned that I wanted to ask you about. She said for a long time after the flood, people would be talking and in just conversation someone would say, when did so and so get married or when did such and such happen?
- SC Everything dated before the flood or after the flood. Right. It is so true.
- MK How long did that go on? Do you have a sense of when people stopped dating things by the flood, does it still happen?

SC Probably it was that immediate generation that was most involved. I don't think the children, that is those that were in school and in early years. They probably forgot about it sooner. But the people who were involved in the flood and owned the property and went through the reconstruction in cleaning up and raising their families, it probably kind of thinned out after that. Of course, the trouble with all old people is as they get older they remember back on these things that happen in the past. I think their memory seems to be better in the old things than it is in the current things. You can't remember from one day to the next, but they can go back 50 - 75 years and remember things that happened. Yes, you might say a couple generations. But it faded out. You don't hear much about it now. I guess that is true with a lot of catastrophes that date things.

MK ??? ~~school bus?~~

SC I don't know, it probably you would have more concern or inquiry about how an outsider would think about a flood like this and the experience we went through. We took them as an every day occurrence after going through it and getting over it and getting settled back into a normal life. So we don't always remember the things that would be of interest to other people.

MK But as you say, the people who didn't live through that experience, even if they grew up in Waterbury, without living through it...

SC This is one thing that created a lot of interest in the people that used to live here or the people that left here when they were young and yet had relatives or friends here. They were greatly concerned. Of course, no one could get to us. Mails weren't running, phones weren't running, the radios were not available, so when they could get a message through, it was just a madhouse. But everyone was so concerned, about the parent, they didn't know if the families homes were still here, the people were still here or not, because we were really cut off. I knew that one girl that was going to the University at the time and she was frantic because her mother and sister were here and she lived right at the lower end of the town next to the river and next to the railroad track and she was really upset. That was true with a lot of the kids that were away to school. We just couldn't help them. The thing that you probably heard about the further communication we had were the army from Ft. Ethan Allen 7th Field Artillery. They came up with a portable radio station and they came in with mules and

horses and set up a regular encampment here. In fact, it was under military rule here in town to keep the plundering out, keep people off the street at night, looting and that sort of stuff. When they got that radio station going, that was the first contact we had and then they could relay messages back to Burlington and pass the word on that way. We had no publication here. The Waterbury Record was our only paper and that was out of the flood though but at first it was a lack of power and lack of help, probably but they got that going again soon after the flood. But that couldn't circulate because the mails weren't going out. One of the big aids at that time was the railroad track. the railroad couldn't run with the mail, so there was a early flier that came up through here to carry the mail. He couldn't land here in Waterbury, he could carry the mail through to Montpelier and it was that much nearer. Because they could travel back and forth through the notches. I think it delivered to Montpelier, Burlington way and it got to us eventually. Cleveland was the flier. He was well-known. He was flying the valley. In fact, back in the days when they had the barn storming flights I had flown with him because he used to go around to the different airports. ??? we had fields in normal times fields around here where they would come and land. For \$10 you would get a ride.

MK Cleveland?

SC Cleveland was the man's name and he was a well-known flier and he carried, I guess he is the first mail carrier that flew regular through here. I imagine there were other fliers, but we knew Cleveland.

MK Is he still living?

SC No, I don't think so. I wouldn't think so. I don't even know where he came from. The Aeronautics Division of Montpelier would have history on that. In fact, we have a man here in town that knew him. He used to be a flier himself and was in CAP work and he knew Cleveland, but I don't think he is alive. I don't know, but I don't think so. I wish I could think of some of the other oddities that happened. I think of things every once in awhile, but this happened in so many houses. This is an interesting thing about our house. Our house is built like a lot of the farm houses around. The house, the L and the barn. They were all connected and our bathroom was in the second story, the front of the house on the street side of the house. As I say this water was a back-up. So it came in fairly fast, but it didn't come in with any rapids,

current water. Our house, the whole section, lifted up with the water and it lifted up from the back end because the bathroom being in front, all the plumbing was up in front and here the plumbing was holding the house down in front and the middle of the house there was a chimney right down to the floor, because we had a furnace there and the string of buildings lifted up from the back end, hinged on the front end and the back of the barn there was practically no water in it at all. My dad had his workshop out there. We had chickens out there and it did no damage at all. The L held the kitchen and the woodshed and it was just a story and half. The house is 2 stories and a half. The barn had a second story. The woodshed got a little water in it. No damage there. The kitchen got accordingly a little bit more. In the front of the house, the second floor the water came up to the middle sash of the upstairs window so you could see the slant from the middle of the second story in the front and dry on the back end. The oddity was that when the water went out which it went down very gradually, that house went back onto its foundation exactly. There was an ax caught underneath the barn on top of the foundation. So when it came down on top of the ax that was holding that up. The chimney had broken off at the base and when it came back down it went right back on the same base. They came in to repair these things for us as part of the reconstruction. The contractor mortared around the chimney a little bit. Everything else was perfect. I just couldn't believe it. If it hadn't been for that plumbing, that house would have gone off its foundation. It might have gone down the river. I don't know. But actually, those houses down through there with the exception of a light shed or barn, something like that, they didn't move. They pretty much stayed. But there were in the town as a picture shows, a lot of small buildings turned over on their side. It was where the currents hit them mostly. In the house, I remember going out into the kitchen and we had a pantry door that was ajar. Probably the water moved it out. On top of it was perched a potash can. Potash was a common thing we used in kitchens those days. We used it for drainage, to clear drains. We used it for cleaning to a certain extent. There just happened to be a can of potash and that was perched right on the top of the door. It just went up there and sat there and the water went down and it just balanced there.

Why it didn't fall down, I don't know. The other thing was that when we were getting ready to leave the house the night of the flood. We thought we were going to spend the night in the house upstairs and so mother had started taking bread, milk and anything she had in odds and ends of food, cans, whatever. She went upstairs and laid them on the cedar chest which was right angle to the head of the stairs back against the wall. She had all of this stuff piled upon the chest. When we came back, that chest was at the foot of the stairs. It had gone up with the water and turned around end wise and come down the staircase. Came down the stairs apparently and floated over the railing and when it came down along side the staircase on the lower hall as if we had put it there. The milk, bread and everything was in tack on top of that cedar chest and not wet at all. So things like that you couldn't help from laughing. No matter how sad you felt about the condition of things. You couldn't help from laughing about these things. It was the same with everybody. Everybody was telling about the things that happened in their houses. Odd things they saw.

MK Was there any ~~declaration~~ ^{declaration of} Federal disaster, declaring areas a disaster zone and sending in money as well as rescue workers for that?

SC Yes, I can't be too sure about ^{that}. I am sure it was declared a disaster area. I think a good share of the state was a disaster area along the river valleys. We did get aid that I know of through the Red Cross. Whether we got any Federal aid I can't recall that. We had local donations. Organizations helped like the Rotary was formed at that time. Masons, churches and things like that. Each one helped their own kind. There is no question about that. As I say, we got the aid at the library. Our school system was not damaged. The buildings were alright. They were out of the water. I wouldn't be an authority on whether we got Federal aid or not directly. Being a disaster area, we would be entitled to it. I think we did. Come to think of it, because we had a delegation here. In fact, Hoover, must have been vice president at the time. He was here. I don't think he was because he was in the flood relief. He came up with the delegate and they stayed at the Waterbury Inn. By that time they could be back into the old Waterbury Inn which housed a lot of people up until the time of the flood. Even after the flood they could take them in upstairs, in the upper rooms. A lot of people were marooned

at the Inn. As soon as the water went down, they got habitable again for guests. We have pictures somewhere showing Mr. Hoover and the delegation of local and national men in front of the Congregational Church discussing things. They had a very well organized group here in town. They coordinated withn the Red Cross and the government. Yes, we must have had quite a bit of government help. Rather, they may have channeled it through the Red Cross. It might have gone through the local organization. We had no great evidence of it in the bank that I know of outside of a bank account maybe. Yes, we got aid alright. In fact, it did a good job in the getting the town back into shape.

MK Someone had said that just automobile travel generally and especially travel in the winter changed so much after the flood, after having the roads rebuilt. Rebuilding them with automobile traveling in mind.

SC Of course, they were doing that at the time of the flood. That was continued afterwards of course. Of course, there was a lot of concern throughout the State because of the State Hospital. There were people here from all over the state that had relatives and they were such extravagant rumors about what they did. The story that was peddled around was that the flood came up so high that they couldn't do anything with the patients. they said they opened the doors and let all the patients go free. Which, was absolutely wrong. They didn't do that. Of course, in those days, we had a population of the hospital of 1,000 people or more. Which is down to about 150 now. They managed. They were very good about it. I imagined some of them got concerned but they did a good job from moving them from the buildings. Quite a bit of it was flooded. But, they could move them around up into the upper spaces. They crowded them in probably. They didn't let any of them go. So, that was probably a concern throughout the state was what happened to the hospital, which was right down in the path of the flood practically. The power house got flooded out. You probably have heard this story and we knew the men that were caught in the boiler room and they got way up to the peak of the building and were already to jump. One of them couldn't swim. The other one was going to swim to the last minute. Just as they got to where

they were about ready to make a try for it or both die, I don't know which, the water stopped rising. They just hung on and it went down and they got out. The hospital was badly hurt. They kept everything under control. They had their own water system at the time. They had some springs up in the hills. I don't know just how it affected them, whether it was good or bad, but they got things going on their own quite rapidly.

MK I wonder if you would know of anyone who was working on road crews, involved in rebuilding any of the roads around here?

SC The state or the town?

MK Either state or town. Do you know of anyone still living who might be available to talk about those kind of experiences?

SC That is a good question. No I don't know of anyone here in town. I think the best way to find out as far as your state workers would be to ask the Highway Department and their records would show. Now there might be some people that knew somebody that worked there, but of course I don't know where the cement work in those days which was put down in sections rather than was done with state help or contract jobs. Of course now, everything is contracted. The state does very little of it. But I did know some of the men who were on some of the crews here locally, but they are all gone. I don't know of anyone that worked on roads. There is only one person in town that I can think of that might have some knowledge of some men is Gleason Ayers. I don't know if you have heard about him or not. Gleason worked for the Highway Department for years. He is a young man. He is younger than I am and he is retired now. In his experience with the Highway Department, he would have come in contact with some of the oldtimers who had worked here probably. He would have knowledge of names, but there would be nobody in the Department of course now. But the Highway Department might give you some help on that.

MK I will check and see what I can come up with. Thank you very much. I appreciate you taking your time.

SC I am glad to help if I can, but again, I was limited because I worked in the bank and I didn't get out as much. Now things went on around me that I'd never know about. In fact, it is true with everyday life. I think I know everybody and I think I know everything that goes on and then all of a sudden, I am talking with somebody and I'll find out things happened I didn't know anything about and yet they looked to me and thought well you know everybody. You worked at the bank. I did, I knew everybody, but I can't think of any alarming things that I could help you out with that you haven't heard.

MK One other thing I need to do is just get a few seconds of just the sound of the room.